

CHAPTER XIII

A Lengthened Program and Additional Centers for Unit Training

In anticipation of increased needs for construction and repair, the Engineers prepared to activate 203 ASF engineer units in the third quarter of 1943—by far the greatest number of such activations for any three-month period during the war.¹ West Camp Claiborne was relieved of much of this load by the two new EUTC's at Camp Ellis, Illinois, and Camp Sutton, North Carolina, both of which operated just long enough to carry the excess. Although Claiborne received a greater influx of trainees through these numerous activations, the strain upon the center was not comparable to that of the previous year. The major adjustments for the operation of a large establishment had already been made. Shortages of equipment were no longer acute. The decline in military construction projects released at last the superior group of civilian specialists which the Engineers had been trying unsuccessfully to reach since the spring of 1942. Moreover, from the summer of 1943 until the change-over to an ASFTC in May 1944 Claiborne trained on successively longer programs. This move eliminated some of the urgency, and the need to crowd so much information within a very short space of time.

Planning at higher levels for a lengthened training program had begun as early as July 1942. In January 1943, SOS requested OCE to submit by the first of February a

thirteen-week advanced unit training program for units that had completed the first thirteen weeks of training but did not have an immediate assignment overseas. The advanced program was to be flexible enough to fit whatever additional time each unit might have, up to thirteen weeks, and was to emphasize team training in tactical and logistical exercises. At least two weeks were to be spent away from camp in practical tasks under field conditions, with full organizational equipment. By June, OCE had also revised the regular thirteen-week program and the center then worked out new schedules covering the whole twenty-six-week period. The revised program for the first thirteen weeks, published on 19 June 1943, was much more elaborate than the preceding one. Although it included a specific program for each type of unit with varying subjects and hours for each, certain basic engineering subjects were included for many types of units, no matter how diverse their functions. While insisting on the need for specialized units, the Engineers remained firmly convinced that such units should be able to turn to and perform any general engineer task. Bridging exercises were prescribed for petroleum distribution companies, water supply battalions, and forestry companies, as well as for other units with a

¹ Unit Tng, Table I.

more direct need for such training. Some knowledge of demolitions, rigging, and the use of basic engineer tools and equipment was required of all units of whatever type.

The basic military training period, lengthened from four weeks to five, was dominated still by rifle marksmanship, 76 hours out of the 240. During the sixth through the thirteenth week, while specialists attended school at the center or at off-post installations, nonspecialists completed the revised regular program of tactical and technical work. Bridge building took up a large block of this time for general service regiments, but less than in the previous program. There was a sharp revision downward in the amount of time for obstacles, demolitions, field fortifications, and camouflage since part of this instruction was moved into the field period. Road building and general construction remained about the same. Tactical subjects were concentrated in the seventh through the tenth week. The emphasis in the last three weeks was on technical engineer work, on fixed and floating bridges, roads, and general construction, with a few hours in obstacle building and a march and bivouac exercise of eight hours.²

At the end of the first thirteen weeks all of the specialists rejoined their units for whatever additional training time might remain before leaving for a port of embarkation. During this period, up to thirteen weeks, each unit trained as a team, with emphasis upon defensive security against attacks, night work with motor convoys, practice in rail movements to familiarize troops with loading procedures, combat tactics in village fighting, shooting at moving targets, and infiltration techniques. During the eleventh and twelfth weeks, regiments engaged in a

continuous day and night field operation with full equipment on a simulated tactical mission, including demolitions and construction. These two weeks of field training were mandatory for all units. Other portions of the program could be compressed or eliminated as necessary. The last week of the program consisted of training tests and inspections in preparation for overseas movement.³

Thirteen regiments, activated at Claiborne between May and September 1943, trained on the new longer program. The quality of fillers, which had become progressively poorer up to this point, took a turn for the better as construction firms all over the country began to complete their contracts with the government. Between July 1942 and February 1943 the number of civilian employees working for contractors on military construction projects dropped almost 50 percent. As construction jobs became increasingly scarce, a part of this labor force, which had until now resisted the blandishments of the Engineers, became much more susceptible. In February 1943 the Chief of Engineers proposed that at least half of the men for the thirteen regiments be procured from among these workers by a voluntary induction campaign similar to those that had been tried before. On 16 March The Adjutant General's Office authorized the recruiting. The Engineers estimated in April that 3,614 men

²(1) Ltr, Asst ExO Tng Div SOS to CofEngrs, 15 Jan 43, sub: Advanced Unit Tng Programs, with 1st Ind, 1 Feb 43. 353.01, Pt. 1. (2) Memo, Brotherton for Gorkinski, 1 May 43, sub: Comments on MTP 5-1 by S-3 Sec EUTC. Same file. (3) Ltr, Actg ExO EUTC to CofEngrs, 10 May 43, sub: Proposed Plan of Instr During MTPs 5-1 and 5-3, with 1st Ind, 5 Jun 43. 353.01, ASFTC Claiborne. (4) MTP 5-1, 19 Jun 43.

³MTP 5-3, 15 Mar 43.

would be needed each month to fill positions in the third, fourth, and fifth grades.⁴

The Corps recognized that this newly available group was made up for the most part of highly skilled and experienced men that contractors had retained as long as possible. To insure the fullest accuracy in assignment, the Engineers activated the 361st General Service Regiment at Claiborne in May 1943 and used it as a receiving pool for all voluntary inductees designated for ASF and AGF engineer units. In this way a temporary surplus of men in any one skill could be held for future units instead of being wasted in immediate assignments to positions for which the individuals had no particular aptitude. The EUTC staff interviewed the men upon arrival, classified them, and assigned them in appropriate grades in the 361st. Finding that the general service regiment had insufficient technician grades to hold all the skilled men desired, the Engineers soon turned the 361st into the more generously endowed special service regiment. While in the 361st, the men were given basic training, fillers for newly activated units being transferred in grade regardless of how much of this training they had completed. Fillers for units that had already begun training transferred only after completion of the prescribed five weeks.⁵

The vast improvement in the quality of enlisted men was not without an ironical twist. By early 1944 Col. Earl G. Paules, who had commanded the 361st the previous summer, observed overseas that many enlisted men in the new regiments had superior education and more construction experience than their officers, who were graduates of OCS or the Officers Training School at Claiborne. "About all that some of the OCS men appeared to have was a High School education. They lacked professional knowl-

edge and aptitude. As regards OTS men, too many were 'second raters' in their profession and many of them lacked technical education. In comparison, many of the enlisted men—volunteers and some draftees—were Graduate Engineers."⁶ Although these enlisted men were better qualified for commissions than the "second raters" who had volunteered or applied for commissions earlier, they entered the regiments at a time when OCS quotas were being drastically reduced and the Engineers were channeling the small number of commissioned civilians into petroleum distribution companies, port construction and repair groups, heavy shop companies, and forestry companies.

By the second week of August the 361st had received 6,570 white inductees and transferred 4,232 of them to units. Of the 4,232 transferred to units, the Claiborne regiments received 2,013, and the regiments at the EUTC at Camp Ellis 1,049. The rest were better qualified for other types of units and were assigned to petroleum distribution companies, heavy shop companies, equipment companies, and base depot companies at Claiborne, and to parts supply companies at both Claiborne and Ellis. All of the 120

⁴ (1) Min, Staff Conf ASF, 28 Apr 43, sub: Résumé of Matters Presented at Staff Conf, 1000, 27 Apr 43. 337, Staff Confs ASF (S). (2) Ltr, CofEngrs to CG SOS, 6 Feb 43, sub: Engr Work Required Overseas. 322, Engrs Corps of (S). (3) Memo, CofEngrs for CG ASF, 14 Apr 43, sub: Voluntary Induction for Engrs. 341.3, Engrs Corps of, Pt. 1. (4) Stat Table, sub: Number of Civilians Employed on Constr Program . . . 1 Jul 40 Through 30 Sep 46. EHD files.

⁵ (1) Memo cited n. 4 (3). (2) Ltr, CofEngrs to CG Eighth SvC, 29 May 43, sub: Asgmt of Engr Technicians to New Units of the ASF. 220.3, ASFTC Ellis. (3) Ltr, CG EUTC Claiborne to ACofEngrs, 7 Jul 43. 320.2, ASFTC Claiborne.

⁶ Rpt, Col Paules, Engr Member WD Obsvrs Bd to CofEngrs, 16 Feb 44, sub: ETO Engr Obsvr's Rpt 2. 370.2, ETO (S).

Negro specialists were absorbed immediately into four Negro regiments at Claiborne.⁷

As the quality of fillers improved the number of specialist courses declined. Between August and October 1943, the center shut down its courses in drafting, mapping, surveying, supply, administration, camouflage, chemical warfare, and communications, and discontinued specialist instruction for riggers, electricians, carpenters, and truck drivers. Many of the courses were not resumed until the spring and summer of 1944 when the quality of fillers again deteriorated.

A further increase in training time occurred in the fall of 1943. At the request of the War Department, OCE extended the initial training program for ERTC's and EUTC's from thirteen to seventeen weeks. Added to the maximum of thirteen weeks in the advanced unit program, this made possible a maximum of thirty weeks of training in the EUTC's. The seventeen-week program, effective for units activated after 25 September 1943, was divided into a basic military period of six weeks, a technical and tactical period of eight weeks, and a field period of three weeks. The training at Claiborne approached a more reasonable pace from this time until the reorganization in May 1944 into an ASFTC.⁸

From the inception of centralized training for ASF engineer units in the PEOC in the spring of 1942 to the end of the EUTC period in May 1944, the Claiborne center trained and sent out approximately 88,000 men in over 200 units. Of the 39 regiments, 15 were Negro. Over 24,000 troops remained at the center in varying degrees of readiness in 81 units, making a total of some 112,000 men either partially or completely trained during this time.⁹

Camp Ellis: A Study in Personnel and Command

The training of all ASF engineer units activated during the latter part of 1943 would have been an impossible burden for the one EUTC at Camp Claiborne. The center system had proved so successful, however, that the Engineers opened two similar EUTC's, one at Camp Ellis, Illinois, and the other at Camp Sutton, North Carolina.¹⁰

Unlike Camp Claiborne and the other EUTC at Camp Sutton, Camp Ellis was sponsored by ASF for the joint training of several of the technical services. This move, primarily an economical arrangement to obviate the need for several small separate centers for individual services, was also indicative of a tendency at ASF headquarters to establish tighter control over the technical services, to make ASF more like AGF and AAF. When the joint training center was first proposed in August 1942, the Corps of Engineers welcomed the additional facilities at Camp Ellis.

At the end of March 1943, Brig. Gen. Walter L. Weible, Deputy Director of Training, ASF, called a conference in Chicago for all ASF officers selected for key positions at the new camp. Weible's remarks to the conference revealed ASF's

⁷ Ltr, ExO EUTC Claiborne to CofEngrs, 10 Aug 43, sub: Wkly Rpt of Status of Voluntarily Inducted Constr Specs, 361st Engrs, EUTC Camp Claiborne, with Incl, Two Stat Summaries, Voluntary Inductees. 353, ASFTC Claiborne, Pt. 2.

⁸ MTP 5-101, 25 Sep 43.

⁹ (1) EUTC West Camp Claiborne, Highlights, 1 Feb 44, 1 Sep 44. EHD file, Monthly Rpts, Claiborne, 1943-44. (2) Rpt, C of Schedules Br EUTC to Dir Mil Tng EUTC, 1 May 44, sub: Apr Monthly Rpt Schedules Br. Same file.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, this section on Camp Ellis is based upon: (1) 353, Ellis; (2) Ellis, 353, 1944, Book II-C, Tng; (3) 322, ASFUTC Ellis; (4) 323.3, ASFTC Ellis; (5) ASF, 354.1, 17 Apr 44; (6) ASF, 333.1, Ellis, 1 Jun 43-31 Oct 43.

anxiety that the experiment succeed. Camp Ellis presented an opportunity to demonstrate the value of a single type of center for all ASF training. At pains to weld the oft-times unruly technical services together, Weible warned against the dangers of branch rivalry:

It is the first time that we have had a center of our own that we haven't had to beg, borrow or steal from somebody else. It is the first chance we have had to develop it along the lines it should follow. . . . This is probably the first time where we have placed Units representing so many different Services at the same post and under the same Unit Training Center Commander.

There are going to be times when various people get hot under the collar and say that So and So isn't playing ball, and there is a chance for much, much friction if you want to develop it, but I think it will run if you can apply the idea that it has to—that we are all in the same war, and we have to cooperate to the advantage of all.¹¹

In this objective ASF apparently succeeded. No serious branch rivalry developed to disrupt the training at Ellis.

The conference at Chicago also served to outline the proposed organization of the center and some of the details of operation. The center was to be flexible enough to allow several combinations of ASF units, according to the needs of the various branches at any one time. In the beginning Camp Ellis would be occupied by Quartermaster, Signal, Medical, and Engineer groups, any of which could be expanded, reduced, or eliminated entirely and others substituted. Administrative and training functions were, as far as possible, to be separated. The post complement, under the control of the Sixth Service Command, was to be the administrative body for the whole camp. An ASFUTC headquarters, made up of representatives of the services and re-

sponsible directly to ASF, was to supervise training. Individual service groups were to concentrate solely on the conduct of training. Although trainees were not to be considered in a common pool for the use of all branches, they could be transferred between units within any one service group in order to distribute experienced and capable men as evenly as possible and to make the units more uniform in quality.

The site selected for the camp was near Lewistown in the western part of central Illinois, a tract of about eighteen thousand acres along the Spoon River a few miles north of the confluence of that river with the Illinois.¹² Construction at Ellis began in the fall of 1942. During the following winter a railroad spur was brought in, roads and streets were cut through the cornfields, and building foundations were laid. Despite unforeseen hitches caused by construction during freezing weather, the center was formally organized on 15 March 1943 and the camp was sufficiently near completion by April to house the first cadres.

Meantime the Engineers had designated Col. Robert D. Ingalls to be the commanding officer for the Engineer group. Ingalls held an engineering degree from Cornell University. He had served overseas with an engineer regiment during World War I and had been on troop duty with engineer units almost continuously from that time till the outbreak of World War II. In 1941 he was executive officer of the 41st General Service Regiment. He subsequently commanded the 35th Engineer Combat Regiment, which he moved, complete with equipment and five months' supplies, from Fort St. John to

¹¹ Conf on Orgn of ASFUTC Camp Ellis, 30–31 Mar 43. 353, Ellis.

¹² WD Quarterly Inventory, Owned, Sponsored and Leased Facilities, 31 Mar 44, p. 84 (C).

Fort Nelson, British Columbia, in the winter of 1941-42, over 200 miles of narrow, twisting, wilderness trail. With this same regiment he built 250 miles of the Alcan Highway through the Canadian Rockies. His ability to lead the troops in achieving this feat, in spite of freezing weather and mountainous terrain, won him the Distinguished Service Medal and the supervision of the southern half of the highway. Ingalls had ample experience in training units at the regimental level. In February 1943 the Engineers sent him to West Camp Claiborne to study the larger job of integrating the instruction of many units. At the conference in March in Chicago he received a further clarification of his task of training a number of engineer units at a center which was not solely an Engineer installation.¹³

To fill the remaining positions in the Engineer group, the Engineers selected experienced instructors and clerks from the two ERTC's, the EUTC at Claiborne, and the Engineer Amphibian Command. On 28 April Colonel Ingalls, 26 officers, and 86 enlisted men arrived at Ellis. On 25 May two general service regiments, two dump truck companies, one parts supply company, and one base depot company were activated. The Engineer group, or EUTC, was organized on 1 June with a unit training capacity of 7,400 men. Space remained for four more regiments and several dump truck companies.¹⁴

The initiation of a standard program of training awaited the reception of fillers. It had been hoped that the voluntary induction of skilled construction workers would provide the major part of the men needed. These volunteers would be older than the average recruit but since they would be experienced in earth-moving and construction

operations their organization and training would be greatly simplified. Unfortunately volunteers did not arrive in nearly the numbers required. By the first part of August the 361st Special Service Regiment at Claiborne had sent only 1,049 men to Camp Ellis. Other fillers in addition to these brought the units to only 36 percent of strength. The original units were less than half filled. Two more regiments and dump truck companies had been activated with even fewer men.

There was plenty of work to do pending the time when training could begin. In late April Ingalls had started the trainer overhead and cadres upon the development of training areas sufficient for the numbers of men scheduled to arrive. With the failure of the voluntary induction program to meet expectations, schedules were soon awry. Fearing that the great mass of fillers would descend upon the center all at once, overtaxing the normal facilities, Ingalls foresightedly put the half-filled units to work enlarging all training areas. Until the middle of August the regiments and dump truck companies built fixed and floating bridge sites along the Spoon River, constructed an additional rifle range, and enlarged obstacle, demolition, rigging, and field fortification areas. When the Engineers discovered that the Spoon River was so narrow and the current so slow that it would freeze over in

¹³ (1) Rpt of Activities Mil Pers Br for Period Ending 15 Feb 43. 020, Engrs Office C of, Jan-Mar 43. (2) Ltr, C of Mil Pers Br to CG EUTC Claiborne, 17 Mar 43, sub: Off and Enl Cadre. 320.2, ASFUTC Ellis. (3) WD GO 23, 15 May 43.

¹⁴ (1) 220.3, ASFUTC Ellis. (2) Ltr, C of Mil Pers Br to CG EUTC Claiborne, 17 Mar 43, sub: Off and Enl Cadre. 320.2, ASFUTC Ellis. (3) Memo, C of O&T Br for CG ASF, 24 Apr 43, sub: Special Issue of Equip to Engr Sec, ASFUTC Camp Ellis, III. 475, ASFUTC Ellis. (4) Memo, Hq EAC for G-1, 21 Apr 43. Hq EAC—Class Sec, 312.1, Corresp (Misc).

winter, they moved the ponton equipment 140 miles north of Ellis to a hutment camp in Starved Rock Park on the Illinois.¹⁵

During this same interval, before the full training program could begin, the center worked out its procedures for instruction in rifle marksmanship. Ingalls gave marksmanship his personal attention, concentrating it into eight consecutive days to the exclusion of all other training. This procedure produced excellent results. In July, 99 percent of the 1,308 white trainees qualified, 18 percent as experts. Of the 391 Negroes, 93 percent qualified, with 4 percent expert. The average of all trainees qualifying during the following month was 97 percent and the number remained high. Qualifications among the first 6,000 men at the center approached 96 percent.

All Engineer training moved toward realism and physical hardening by the spring of 1943 in response to reports from overseas. The Ellis center opened just as this trend became more pronounced. Ingalls was convinced personally, as well, through his recent experience on the Alcan Highway, that the Engineer training at Ellis should be rugged in order to prepare both officers and men for the fatigue of sustained overseas operations. On 31 July 1943, before the majority of the fillers had arrived, he delineated his policy to the unit officers who would conduct the training:

Time is short. Your unit will soon be in battle. Every hour is precious. Each one must be devoted to preparation. You cannot press too hard. Put the pressure on as hard as you may, yet you still will not approach the conditions of fatigue and hardship your units will soon face. An attitude of tolerance, pity or sympathy for your unit during the rigors of training will be reflected in poor preparation and consequent suffering or disaster when in an active theater. Every training task must be approached as though it were a battle

mission. There must be no "breaks." No rest should be prescribed, except that due to physical exhaustion. There should be constant pressure through the chain of command to "get the job done."¹⁶

Shortly thereafter, just as had been expected, the center was swamped with the remaining fillers. Within three weeks, beginning on 17 August, almost 8,000 arrived. By 7 September space designed for 7,400 men held 10,500. Until the end of October, two regiments and four dump truck companies had to be housed in pyramidal and shelter tents without floors. Yet it was not the quantity but the quality of the fillers that caused the greatest concern to the center's staff. Most of these fillers were either men reclassified from a limited duty status, or eliminated as surplus overhead from service commands and other stations. Some obviously were undesirables. An OCE inspector in late August took a close look at four of the general service regiments and reported some startling cases of men wearing metal braces on their backs, injured right hands on right handed men, victims of infantile paralysis, deformed arms, legs, feet, and glass eyes.¹⁷ A contingent of 461 men arriving at Ellis in late August represented the dregs of a group of undesirables who had been shunted from one station to another. In early August, Belvoir received these men from Fort Harrison. Out of the 862 men, Belvoir found 95 illiterates, 60 courts-martial cases, 87 limited service per-

¹⁵ Ltr, Ingalls to ACofEngrs, 15 Jan 44. 353 ASFTC Ellis.

¹⁶ Incl 32, in Hist of Engr Group, Camp Ellis, Ill., 25 Jan 45. 353, Camp Ellis.

¹⁷ Incl, Rpt of Inspec of 368th, 371st, 1301st, 1303d Gen Sv Regts, 29 Aug 43, by Capt Erhard E. Dittbrenner, to basic Memo, C of O&T Br for CG ASF, 2 Sep 43, sub: Tng Inspec of Units Committed for Overseas Movement. ASF, 333.3 Engr (S).

sonnel, 33 aliens, and 62 cases of time lost because of misconduct. Sixty-six percent of the total were in AGCT Classes IV and V. Belvoir retained 401 of these and shipped the remainder to Ellis.¹⁸

The efforts of the unit officers to conduct an orderly course of training were in the main abortive. Frequent disruptions occurred during the next few months as the men were screened to determine how many could be retained. Great numbers were discharged. Many of the men in the first three grades could not be used in these units and had to be reassigned. Transfers between units were continuous. In the month of October so many men were eliminated that one regiment could not begin training and three other regiments had to repeat their last four weeks. By the end of November the screening process in the seven regiments came to an end. Out of the 8,000 fillers, 3,940 were examined and reclassified. Of these examined, 1,917 were discharged, 1,310 were reassigned, and only 713 returned to duty. About 3,000 replacements had to be obtained.

Almost two thirds of these replacements were needed in specialist positions. The greatest deficiencies were in construction foremen, construction carpenters, bridge carpenters, electricians, utility repairmen, riggers, quarrymen, and blaster powder men—the very core of engineer skills. Realizing that the replacements would probably not furnish the skills needed, the center set up specialist schools. Sixteen different courses were offered. Since many of the OCS graduates knew little more about construction machinery than the men, the center attempted to provide this background through two specialist courses for officers in vehicle and heavy equipment maintenance.

According to the original plans the EUTC

overhead was to conduct the training of specialists, but the great influx of trainees all at one time made it impossible for the small overhead to carry the load. Compared with the EUTC at Claiborne, which had one officer for every 27 men in training, Ellis had one officer for every 144 men. Enlisted overhead was comparable. In a period when the War Department was insisting on cuts in overhead, requests for additional men for group headquarters met with little success. The first solution for the conduct of specialist training under these restrictions was to leave specialist training to the units, each regiment running for all the rest those schools for which it had the best qualified instructors. When a unit moved out of the camp, whole schools had to be discontinued. In March 1944 the Ellis center, as Claiborne had earlier, tightened its control over this program. Although still under the necessity to draw upon unit personnel for instructors, the schools themselves were centralized under the group headquarters and given a continuity which they had not had before.

The fact that industrial specialists were older than the average recruit and that many of the men retained after screening of the group of limited service fillers barely met the physical requirements for engineer duty did not induce Ingalls to change the philosophy of training that he had formed during his years of Army service. In an effort to toughen his men and make the training more realistic, he allowed few breaks at any time during the day except for meals, devised twenty-four-hour bridge building exercises, and emphasized night problems and bivouacs. The MTP set aside five days

¹⁸ Memo, Maj Gen Virgil L. Peterson for Deputy CofS, 23 Sep 43, sub: Overseas Readiness Status of the 355th Engr Gen Sv Regt. ASF, 333.3 IG, Engr.

for a marching exercise to cap the end of the period of technical training, four days for marching and the fifth day for rest. The distance and rate of march were left to the discretion of individual center commanders. At Ellis the units took a 125-mile road march in four days. The impact of this exercise varied directly with the weather. According to a battalion commander in the 1301st General Service Regiment, the "125 mile hike permanently injured some of our men that had a partial disability."¹⁹ The regimental commander who took over the unit shortly after the march noted that the exercise "crippled a number of men and left scars on everybody."²⁰

Typical of Ingalls' ideal—intensive training under realistic conditions—was the building of two landing mat airstrips 150 by 5,500 feet in late November and early December 1943. At one o'clock one afternoon five general service regiments and dump truck companies started on the first strip. One regiment loaded mat onto trucks continuously. The four others met in the center of the strip and began to lay the sections, each regiment working toward a corner of the field. Work continued all night. By five o'clock the next afternoon the last section was in place. Although he realized that the training manual was overly optimistic in prescribing this job as an eleven-hour operation for one regiment, Ingalls was understandably dissatisfied with the twenty-eight hours which the five regiments had taken. He determined to build the second strip in eight hours by using six regiments. Each of the 108 platoons had 320 sections of mat to place. Without previous warning, Ingalls gave the signal to begin work just as it started to get dark one cold December afternoon. An hour later it began to snow, a "heavy fall of big wet flakes" that continued

all through the night. "Brooms and shovels were brought out to clean snow from the joints as the work progressed."²¹ By six o'clock the next morning the first platoon had finished. The first regiment to finish had placed all its mat by early the next afternoon. Although the entire strip was not completed until five o'clock, the first plane could land by the middle of the afternoon. Ingalls again expressed disappointment. Even with an additional regiment, building time had been speeded up by only four hours. Conceding that the weather was partially to blame, Ingalls nevertheless believed that poor leadership at all levels and poor organization within the platoons were the major delaying factors. Accordingly he sponsored a series of competitions in mat laying among all of the platoons, each platoon laying 160 sections. By the middle of January 1944 when each regiment had eliminated all but one champion platoon he scheduled a final competition for the best platoon of the whole Engineer group. In this way Ingalls brought the best platoons to such a level of competence that they could lay 160 sections of mat in thirty minutes. He estimated that under ideal conditions six regiments could complete a landing strip in four hours. The competitions verified the fact that it took much more time to lay this mat than the training manual indicated. It would take one regiment as much as four or five days to haul and lay a strip of this size as opposed to the allotted eleven hours.²²

Much good training resulted from the urgency which Ingalls injected into the pro-

¹⁹ Ltr, Col Willard B. Wells, USAR, to C of EHD, 3 Feb 55.

²⁰ Incl to Ltr, Col Francis X. Purcell, Jr., to C of EHD, 31 Dec 54.

²¹ Ltr, Ingalls to ACofEngrs, 15 Jan 44. 353, ASFTC Ellis.

²² *Ibid.*

gram. The thoroughness with which he attended to details was undoubtedly beneficial. Rifle marksmanship qualifications remained high. The regiments knew how to lay landing mat before the competitions were over. The extensive bridge building exercises gave the units more than a familiarization in this fundamental engineer operation. Physical conditioning was continuous. For example, obstacle courses were so placed that troops moving from one training area to another ran these courses instead of simply marching from place to place.

The commanding officer of the 1301st General Service Regiment, which distinguished itself overseas as a combat unit, regarded Ingalls as "a devoted and brilliant engineer officer, an independent thinker, and a man of the finest quality." However, he had some reservations about training methods at Ellis:

The best result of the type of training conducted was that no situation that the regiment met in combat seemed nearly as hard as what we went through in training. On the other hand, it was difficult under these conditions to develop the engineering techniques that a general service regiment or similar organization should have. Also, the severity of the training eliminated some men who were highly qualified technically but were not strong enough or young enough to stand up under such conditions.

Most people with whom I discussed this training system were opposed to it, and . . . I was about the fifth commander of the 1301st during its nine months of training. I accepted Colonel Ingall's system and tried to get the most out of it, but I believe that the method was extreme, and I would prefer to train engineer troops under more favorable conditions and with more attention to the development of techniques as opposed to combat type training.²³

A battalion officer in the same regiment recollected, "We all thought we would never

'make the POE' but someone . . . thought differently and how right he was. We had no sooner reached England when the men (and Officers) settled down, went to work and developed into the best General Service Regiment in the Third Army."²⁴ Varying shades of opinion came back to Ingalls from England as the units deployed overseas. Some of the unit officers observed that the training had served them well. One believed that "your training is exactly along the right lines; only if anything, it should be more so." Another wrote "We are learning a great deal and what I wanted to tell you more than anything else is that the training you gave me was the best thing that ever happened. . . . We needed everything you gave us and a little more. I actually wish that the training was stiffer." A third gave a rather weak endorsement, saying that "the way you are carrying on your training is O. K. for what we are doing here . . .," and added rather ambiguously, "at present we are living in tents on a fine camp site, and finding our job here mighty easy compared to Ellis."²⁵

While some of the engineers at Ellis considered the training ideal, others chafed under the realistic standards. Contributing to the unrest was the fact that the Engineer group could compare these standards quite easily with those set by the adjoining Quartermaster and Medical groups. Training methods and types of tasks varied greatly in the three groups; these variations could scarcely go unnoticed. Morale suffered further as a result of overcrowding in the Engineer group. Contrary to one of the primary

²³ Ltr, Purcell to C of EHD, 31 Dec 54.

²⁴ Ltr, Col Willard B. Wells to C of EHD, 3 Feb 55.

²⁵ Quoted in Incl 32, in Hist of Engr Group, Camp Ellis, Ill., 25 Jan 45. 353, Ellis.

aims of this ASF center, there was not enough flexibility in the space arrangements. In late August 1943, for example, when part of the engineers were forced to live in pup tents, there was vacant housing in the Medical group. Moreover, the majority of the August fillers were of a different sort from the relatively small group of volunteers that had arrived earlier. Discipline and morale were poor. Many of these fillers had been in the Army for months without completing basic training. Some came from other services and needed instruction in basic Engineer subjects. Such men resented further basic training. The interruptions to the program throughout the fall months of 1943, including the wholesale discharges and transfers and the shifting of personnel from one unit to another, did nothing to improve the situation.²⁶

But the chief source of discontent was the constant pressure. Gripe letters reached Sixth Service Command headquarters, ASF headquarters, OCE, and at least one congressman. OCE received numerous informal requests for transfers. Although most of the inspectors found nothing fundamentally wrong with the Engineer training, some reported the physical requirements too severe and commented specifically on the 125-mile march. Accordingly, this march was abandoned in January 1944. Perhaps such reactions as that of the 1317th General Service Regiment which had made the march in severe winter weather, pointed out even more dramatically than the inspectors some of the disadvantages of the exercise. The AWOL rate in this regiment jumped from 52 at the end of November to 112 in mid-December and to 139 by the end of that month.²⁷

No official action, other than the request to discontinue the 125-mile march, resulted

from any complaints until the spring of 1944. Then a single letter triggered off a series of actions which culminated in the transfer of Ingalls. On 17 April a major serving with a construction battalion at Ellis wrote a short note to a contact in ASF headquarters. The note included a request that Somervell be given an inclosed letter detailing some of the things which he considered wrong about engineer training at Camp Ellis. The complaints ranged from "special hand salutes," use of swagger sticks by officers, and the necessity of "dodging 'gestapo' informers of the high command," to the "careful assignment of men to units by height rather than qualification" and the sodding of the lawns in the Engineer group. The lawn sodding came in for special comment. "A few days ago the entire Engineer Group of some 2000 men, 172 trucks and more than a dozen bulldozers were ordered to haul sod to pretty up the place. It was the third day of rain. Equipment and men worked in mud from 6 inches to 3 feet deep. Imagine the damage to equipment alone."²⁸

Whether or not this letter ever came to

²⁶ (1) Inspec, 1317th Gen Sv Regt (Negro), 1 Jan 44, by Lt Col Charles B. Schweizer, OCE. ASF, 333.3, Engrs 1-1-44. (2) Incl, Rpt of Inspec of 368th, 371st, 1301st, 1303d Gen Sv Regts, 29 Aug 43, by Dittbrenner, to Memo, C of O&T Br for CG ASF, 2 Sep 43, sub: Tng Inspec of Units Committed for Overseas Movement. ASF, 333.3, Engr (S). (3) Ltr, Dittbrenner to Sixth SvC, 29 Aug 43. Sixth SvC, 333.1-6, Gen.

²⁷ (1) Ltr (unsigned) to CG Sixth SvC, 14 Oct 43. Sixth SvC, 333.1-6, Gen. (2) Interv, Mary Pagan, Mil Pers Br OCE, 16 Aug 54. (3) Inspec, 1317th Gen Sv Regt (Negro), 1 Jan 44, by Schweizer. ASF, 333.3, Engrs 1-1-44.

Inspection reports of OCE, Sixth Service Command, and ASF have been scanned for this entire period. There was no special inspection made by The Inspector General's Department in the spring of 1944.

²⁸ Ltr, Maj C. P. Carson to Somervell, 17 Apr 44. ASF, 354.1, 17 Apr 44.

the attention of Somervell, it did circulate among various divisions in ASF headquarters. The person who first received the letter was of the opinion that, although it was addressed to Somervell, the proper place for it was in OCE. Within a few days, however, the letter reached the desk of Col. Arthur G. Trudeau, Deputy Director of Military Training, ASF. On 22 April 1944 Trudeau directed a memorandum to the Chief of Engineers and to the Commanding General, Sixth Service Command, inclosing a copy of the major's letter with the signature deleted. Trudeau noted that the military training of engineer troops at Ellis had been under similar criticism for almost a year. He requested both OCE and the Sixth Service Command to eliminate immediately any existing malpractices. Each was to submit a report recommending any desirable changes in trainer personnel or any further action which might be taken by ASF.

This memorandum came as a surprise to the staff at Camp Ellis. Ingalls' immediate superior in command of Camp Ellis, Col. John S. Sullivan, considered him an excellent trainer, if something of a martinet.²⁹ Sullivan's eventual reply to the Sixth Service Command was therefore almost solely a defense of Ingalls, in fact, a rephrasing of Ingalls' own memorandum to him on the subject on 26 April. Ingalls wrote proudly of the marksmanship record which the Engineer group had earned and emphasized that no other training subjects had suffered from this achievement. Many of the specific criticisms concerned matters which Ingalls had hoped would improve morale:

As I remember, the anonymous writer mentioned swagger sticks, special salute, assignment of men to companies by height, sodding of areas alongside of barracks and officers assembly.

I don't believe in officers carrying their hands in their pockets. I also believe in doing whatever may rightly be done to render a unit distinctive. I have encouraged officers to carry swagger sticks for these two reasons. No officer is forced to carry one, nor discriminated against if he chooses not to do so.

The method of salute taught follows exactly the salute prescribed in training regulations and also as taught at West Point (so I have been told by those in attendance there).

I have served in two regiments where men have been assigned to companies by height and have found it to be a morale factor of value to those units. It also has practical advantages. I have found no disadvantage. It is a simple way to solve a large percentage of initial classification procedure because of the operation of the law of averages.

Most of the sodding accomplished here has been done after retreat. On one very rainy day recently when it was felt that most training would have been inefficient, all worked at sodding. There was a considerable element of training for all in that day's work. Our area now is the best looking area in Camp Ellis. I'm sure our soldiers are proud of it.³⁰

Other portions of the major's letter had contained adverse comments on the assignment of personnel to engineer units and upon the course of instruction at the Engineer School. From OCE Sturdevant confined his answer to these matters, assuming that the Sixth Service Command would counter the criticisms applying directly to Camp Ellis. That this reply was less than satisfactory was evident in the subsequent memorandum from Trudeau reminding the Chief of Engineers that OCE was responsible for the assignment of officers and for the character of training being given at Ellis. On 6 May 1944, Reybold answered in more detail. He touched upon the "large number of misfits and cast-offs" received as fillers

²⁹ Interv, Sullivan, 20 May 54.

³⁰ Memo, Ingalls for Sullivan, 26 Apr 44. Ellis, 353, 1944, Book II—C Tng.

at Ellis and the shortage of heavy construction equipment and trucks throughout 1943. The "unduly strenuous physical requirements" had come to his attention and were "no longer required." But the burden of his answer was the "inadequate allotment of officer and enlisted administrative and trainer personnel." As to the assignment of officers, Reybold explained that "a careful study is made of all those available before actual assignment is made to any unit or training center. Obviously, these studies and assignments are based upon available records. When an officer fails to meet his responsibilities, the Chief of Engineers, upon the request of the Service Command, promptly supplies his best available qualified officer to replace the unqualified officer. For the determination of an officer's actual ability, the Chief of Engineers depends upon the service commander and the camp commander . . . for units not under his control."³¹

Since the camp commander believed Ingalls was doing an exceptionally good job and the Sixth Service Command had rendered no adverse report, the transfer of Ingalls early in May 1944 undoubtedly followed a different procedure from that described. ASF was acutely conscious of public relations, was obviously concerned over the unofficial comments being received, and might conceivably be hypersensitive about the reputation of this ASF center. Pressure from ASF to remove a controversial figure might well have been the deciding factor. There was never any formal investigation of the EUTC.³²

Col. Herman W. Schull, Jr., took command of the EUTC on 17 May 1944. With the decline of engineer unit activations, the center soon thereafter had served its main purpose. On 25 January 1945 the Engineer

group was formally disbanded. In all it trained fifty units, including seven general service regiments, a total of about 13,000 men. The work of preparing these units for overseas assignments was largely completed during the year Ingalls was in command. He had organized the center with hand-picked men familiar with the intricacies of an Engineer training installation. With them, he had developed an excellent physical plant well planned for engineer use. He had infused the center with a sense of realism, had given the troops a foretaste of the discomforts and hardships to come. Despite the disruptions caused by the numerous unqualified fillers, the difficulties of supervising with too small a staff, and the dissatisfactions and dissensions that arose from his interpretation of the training mission, Ingalls prepared these troops to play creditable roles in active theaters.

The 1301st, 1303d, and 1306th Engineer General Service Regiments made the list of eleven such units which the Office of the Chief Engineer, ETO, recommended for Meritorious Service Unit Plaques on 20 November 1944. These three regiments sup-

³¹ 1st Memo Ind, Sturdevant for CG ASF, 28 Apr 44; 2d Memo Ind, Trudeau for CofEngrs, 1 May 44; 3d Memo Ind, Reybold for CG ASF, 6 May 44; all on Memo, Trudeau for CofEngrs, CG Sixth SvC, Dir Mil Tng Div ASF, 22 Apr 44, sub: Engr Tng at Camp Ellis, Ill. 323.3, ASFTC Ellis.

³² (1) Interv, Sullivan, 20 May 54. (2) Interv, Col J. P. Buehler, 20 May 54. (3) Interv, Col Edward A. Brown, Jr., 16 Aug 54. (4) Interv, Mary Pagan, Mil Pers Br OCE, 16 Aug 54. (5) Interv, Trudeau, 4 Mar 54.

Most of the people interviewed had but vague recollections of this whole affair. Trudeau and Brown (of Military Personnel, OCE) remembered nothing. The consensus was that ASF pressure most likely caused the transfer of Colonel Ingalls.

Drafts of this chapter were submitted to Ingalls for review, but in accordance with his request comments he made on them in letters to the Chief of Military History have not been used.

ported the drive of the Third Army through France in place of combat engineer organizations, which were not at that time available. Innumerable bridges had to be placed in the shortest possible time in the most forward positions. At Thionville, the 1306th threw a 200-foot double-triple Bailey across the Moselle under constant mortar and artillery fire. The 1301st maintained this high caliber of work later on the 70-ton Oppenheim bridge, built within fourteen days from materials obtained in the locality. This bridge, both in design and construction, was considered by the Chief Engineer, ETO, as the best of all the Rhine bridges built by field force units. A grateful XII Corps in the spring of 1945 reported magnificent support from the 1303d.³³

Camp Sutton: A Study in Racial and National Tensions

The Engineers opened the third EUTC on 20 July 1943 at Camp Sutton, North Carolina.³⁴ The site covered over two thousand acres of steeply rolling, partially wooded land near the southern border of the state a few miles east of the town of Monroe. Two good highways bounded the tract on the north and south. A railroad and another highway paralleled each other through the center. Troop quarters, connected by dirt roads with the outlying tactical areas, adjoined the central east-west highway. A small creek which ran through the camp from north to south provided good sites for fixed bridge construction. The nearest river of suitable size for ponton bridge and stream crossing instruction was the Catawba, thirty-four miles southwest of Sutton in South Carolina. The firing range was eighteen miles southeast of the camp on

7,000 acres of leased land near Pageland, South Carolina.

Camp Sutton had many of the characteristics of the original setup at Claiborne. It was a tent camp built in 1941 for only three months' use. The Engineers expected to occupy Sutton for about a year, or just long enough to train the units sent there at the outset. Minimum improvements were to be made. By November 1943 the tents had been modified for winter use but were extremely dilapidated. The few theater-of-operations type of buildings were insufficient to house all post and EUTC headquarters personnel. Negro and white troops were housed separately on opposite sides of Richardson Creek.³⁵

As set up in July 1943 the center had a capacity of 13,000 men, enough for five white and four Negro general service regiments, but almost immediately had to expand to accommodate 16,000 men and

³³ (1) Ltr, C of Troops Div Office C Engr ETO to Engr Channel Base Sec ComZ *et al.*, 20 Nov 44. Hq OCE ETO, 200.6, Awards and Decorations, 1944. (2) After Action Rpt, Third Army, 1 Aug 44-9 May 45, Vol. II, Staff Sec Rpts, Engr Sec, pp. 2-18. (3) Hugh M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1950), pp. 407-08. (4) Ltr, Purcell to C of EHD, 31 Dec 54. (5) *Final Engr Rpt, ETO*, pp. 303-04. (6) Rpt, Hq XII Corps to TAG, sub: Rpt of Combat Opns, 1-31 Mar 45. Opns Br AGO, Vol. IV, XII Corps A/A Rpt, Mar 45.

³⁴ Unless otherwise noted, this section is based on: (1) 353, Sutton (C); (2) 353, EUTC Sutton; (3) P&T Div file, EUTC Sutton; (4) 602, Sutton (C); (5) Rpt of Visit to Camp Sutton, N. C., C of Sv Force Br, Office ACofS G-3, 2 May 44. EHD files; (6) Lee, Employment of Negro Troops, Ch. IX, pp. 42-44; X, pp. 68-79; XIV, pp. 48, 76-80.

³⁵ (1) Ltr, TAG to CG Fourth SvC, 15 Jul 43, sub: Estab of EUTC Camp Sutton, N. C. 323.3, EUTC Sutton. (2) Ltr, CO EUTC Sutton to CG Fourth SvC, 15 Oct 43, sub: Constr at Camp Sutton, N. C., with 3d Ind, C of Mil Constr Br to CG ASF, 12 Nov 43, with 4th Ind, C of Constr Plan Br ASF to CofEngrs, 18 Nov 43. 600.1, Sutton (C).

other types of units. During the year and a half of its existence the Sutton EUTC trained forty-nine units, including base equipment companies, base depot companies, dump truck companies and utilities detachments, general service regiments, and construction battalions. Some 3,500 Italian collaborators, formerly prisoners of war, arrived to be organized and trained in April 1944. A German prisoner of war compound of several hundred men remained in the camp at all times. From this highly charged mixture was to come an explosion in late summer 1944.³⁶

Just as for Camp Ellis, the Engineers drew upon existing training installations to staff Camp Sutton. The 50 officers and 94 enlisted men who made up the original training division at Sutton came from the two ERTC's at Fort Belvoir and Fort Leonard Wood, from the Engineer School, from OCE, and from the Manhattan District. All officers had from six months to two years experience as instructors. The officer allotment proved sufficient for the task but the number of enlisted men had to be more than doubled. By June 1944, 49 officers and warrant officers and 201 enlisted men were on the staff of the training division. Within the next six months limited service personnel, given an opportunity to serve as understudies before appointment to positions of responsibility, gradually replaced them. In December 1944, when the center closed, about 80 percent of the training division was subject to limited service only. As at the other EUTC's the training division co-ordinated the efforts of the individual units in the use of time and facilities and attempted to make the training more uniform.

All of the training at Sutton should have been of extremely high quality. The pattern for concentrated instruction had already

been tested at Claiborne and at the ERTC's. The experienced supervisors had only to make a synthesis of the training procedures and practices that had worked well at the training installations from which they came. Since few of the units were pressed for time, MTP's could be followed almost to the letter. Faulty planning at higher levels canceled out these advantages to some extent. Too great a load was thrown upon the center within a short space of time. Six general service regiments arrived within the first thirty days, allowing little staggering of training and resulting in an inefficient use of equipment. Special equipment for units other than general service regiments did not arrive at all and could not be procured for several months. Equipment and materials for the specialist schools came in insufficient quantities. The simplest sort of training areas, such as drill fields, had not been prepared in advance. While the construction of such areas provided excellent exercises for heavy equipment specialists and the dump truck company during the first few months, general training would have been improved if the areas had been ready for use at the start.

By October 1943 facilities were much improved. At the end of the first three months twenty-six drill fields had been laid out, graded, and drained. Four fixed bridge sites lined the lower course of Richardson Creek, including one site for the H-10 and one for the Bailey bridge. Nine tactical areas were defined in the wooded northern portion of the camp for squad and platoon scouting and reconnaissance. A demolitions area occupied the isolated northern tip of the whole tract. Three regular obstacle courses and

³⁶ Ltr, ACofEngrs to CG ASF, 14 Sep 43, sub: EUTC, Camp Sutton, N. C. 322, EUTC Sutton.

one knot obstacle course provided physical conditioning and practical tests in rigging. By early 1944 the center was well supplied with classroom buildings, motor vehicles, and special equipment such as asphalt repair plants, woodworking machinery, blacksmith and welding sets, and well drilling gear.

The headquarters staff at Sutton gave ample evidence that it had learned much from past experience. Inspectors expressed satisfaction with detailed plans for executing and supervising the work. Specialist training was orderly and efficient and received repeated commendation. Instructors came from the Schools and Specialist Section of the Training Division or from the officers' pool. When the EUTC schools became crowded, individual units set up parallel courses using lesson plans furnished by the Schools and Specialist Section, but this expedient had to be resorted to only occasionally. The bulk of the nearly 7,000 specialists received instruction in schools run by the center.³⁷

What made Sutton fail to live up to expectations was the personnel received and the uncertainties in unit organization. A preponderance of Negro troops who had had little opportunity to acquire fundamental skills presented an almost insuperable handicap. Few Negroes assigned to Sutton had ever driven a truck or worked with mechanic's tools before assignment to dump truck companies. General service regiments required men of a higher degree of education, aptitude, and experience for draftsmen, surveyors, structural designers, construction supervisors, and operators of complicated heavy machinery.

Following the War Department's decision that Negro and white units of the same type could not be trained at the same rate, OCE

published an MTP in October 1943, ostensibly for substandard units but primarily to give the Negro engineer soldier a longer training period to compensate for his educational and vocational deficiencies. The basic military period for substandard units was extended from six to nine weeks. The new program emphasized discipline. No Negro officers were to give basic military instruction. Twice as much time as usual was allotted for military discipline, customs and courtesies, and guard duty. There was an enormous increase in marches and bivouacs, from twenty to seventy-six hours. Five weeks were added to the regular eight-week tactical and technical period, and field training lasted for four weeks instead of three. Review and makeup time was doubled for both general service regiments and dump truck companies. The repetition of subject matter during these frequent reviews helped to keep the material fresh in the minds of slow learners. The number of tests was also doubled to keep a closer check upon unit progress.³⁸

The longer period of preparation reduced some of the pressure in qualifying Negro dump truck companies and general service regiments at Sutton. The center had sent out three white and three Negro regiments, or about 7,500 men, by March 1944. In the same month the Engineers began to convert some of the general service regiments to construction battalions, which had more and heavier equipment. One white regiment just completing its training did not reorganize as a construction battalion, but the remaining white regiments and the four

³⁷ 1st Ind, 8 Mar 44, on Ltr, Dir Mil Tng Div Fourth SvC to CG Camp Sutton, 4 Mar 44, sub: Tng of Well Drillers. 353, Engrs, Mil Tng Div ASF.

³⁸ (1) MTP 5-101, 25 Sep 43. (2) MTP 5-101-A, 30 Oct 43.



NEGRO TROOPS TRAINING AT CAMP SUTTON, *February 1943.*

Negro regiments made the change in early March.³⁹

In addition to having more and heavier machines of the types issued to general service regiments, the construction battalions also had tractor operated cranes, concrete mixers, powered and towed road rollers, cable operated road rooters, towed road scrapers, trailer mounted lubricators, and a mobile power plant. OCE tried unsuccessfully to get enough additional machinery to the EUTC to make up four full sets of construction battalion equipment upon conversion of the units. Only one complete set of equipment had arrived at the EUTC by mid-April; the other three sets were scheduled for delivery some time within the next two months.⁴⁰

It seemed to the staff at Sutton that an impossible goal had been set. OCE was in full agreement and had already protested the conversion of Negro units to construction

battalions. Although with constant supervision many of the Negro men had become proficient in operating the organizational equipment of the general service regiment, the new machines to be issued to the construction battalion imposed a demand for a whole new group of operators, supervisors, and foremen. The same questions would have to be answered. How can one train a surveyor without a mathematical background to build on? How can one turn a dirt farmer into an experienced construction

³⁹ (1) Rpt, CO Camp Sutton, 10 Sep 43, sub: Consolidated Strength Rpt (Present and Absent) as of 2400, 8 Sep 43. 320.2, EUTC Sutton. (2) Analysis of the Present Status of the War Dept Troop Basis, 1 Jan 45. AGO Special Reference Collection. (3) Memo, C of Mob Br for ACofEngrs for War Planning, 31 Mar 44, sub: Engr Units at Camp Sutton, N. C. 320.2, Jan 42-Sep 44 (C). (4) See above, page 236, for a discussion of the organization of construction battalions.

⁴⁰ (1) T/O&E 5-27, 1 Apr 42. (2) T/O&E 5-75, 23 Dec 43.

foreman in so few weeks? The most promising of the enlisted men had already been sent to off-post schools and most had returned qualified only as rodmen and chainmen, machinists, and construction machinery operators. Few had been recommended for supervisory positions. The EUTC flatly announced it could not fill nine master sergeant and technical sergeant ratings. Maintenance inspectors, construction superintendents, machine shop foremen, stonemason foremen, plumber foremen, surveyors, construction supervisors, road construction designers, and battalion motor sergeants would have to be obtained elsewhere. OCE replied that none could be supplied and that for the most part they must be developed at the EUTC from the best men possible, since special service schools could train only four of the nine ratings. In early July one of the construction battalions, sent out on a construction operation near Lenoir, North Carolina, had to be removed from the job because of the poor quality of the work.

OCE finally succeeded in convincing the War Department of the soundness of its position. The new general service regiment, which was adopted as a compromise organization, eliminated many of the more complicated jobs. Three of the four Negro construction battalions, the only units of that type remaining at the center by that time, were thereupon reorganized for the second time, with the expectation that the simplification would enable the EUTC to get all five units into shape for movement overseas by September. In August, with the occurrence of racial disturbances, it was determined to move all of the Negro troops, including the dump truck companies, overseas at their current status of training as quickly

as possible. The last of the Negro units left the center in October 1944.

Some of the tensions that built up at this center were typical of those at other training establishments with concentrations of segregated Negro troops. Disorders involving large numbers of Negro soldiers occurred frequently at many camps during the summer of 1943, and by January 1944 ASF had placed the prevention of racial disturbances at the top of its list of current problems. Post and unit officers were cautioned to stress a high degree of military discipline, improve recreational opportunities, allow the advancement of Negro officers according to their merit, better public relations, and above all keep alert for potential trouble and take preventive measures. A careful and secret mail censorship could be used to gather information. Sutton had the additional friction of Italian troops after the spring of 1944. Neither Negroes nor Italians were welcome in the small southern communities surrounding the camp. Through race and language barriers, both groups were isolated from their environment.

The 3,500 Italian troops that arrived at Sutton in April 1944 were at first slated for organization into dump truck companies, but almost immediately plans changed. They were to be formed into general service units instead. A month after their arrival they were still disorganized, the center having received neither a T/O&E for them nor any general directive to guide their training. This uncertainty and lack of direction damaged morale. The fact that they were foreigners and, until recently, active enemy soldiers limited off-post recreation. The center authorities believed that their "conduct has been reasonable under the circumstances" but "there are continued irritating

affairs between them and civilians. Their demands for privileges increase” Had it been possible to give them more active and constructive work away from the camp their attitudes might have improved, but civilian complaints brought about closer confinement. “Fourth Service Command refuses to allow them to go in the field for three weeks. A very good project had been worked up for them—cutting fire lanes on state land, well away from habitation. As it is now, they are doing WPA work around the post.”⁴¹ By early July, to the relief of the commanding officer, 25 percent of the Italians had been shifted to another station. By mid-July all had gone.

The Italians had been only one of the sources of irritation and tension that had disrupted the training at Sutton. The principal one was still the Negro units. The reorganizations, from general service regiments to construction battalions and then back again, caused frequent changes in officers and kept the units off-balance. The trend toward the use of more complicated machinery forced the inexperienced Negro soldier to the limit of his ability. The frustrations of trying to do a job with too little background caused the men to appear undependable when promoted to positions of responsibility. They resented their complete isolation from white troops as well as the fact that great care was taken to keep white officers superior to Negro officers in units of mixed command. Aggravating the situation was the unfortunate attitude of some of the center officials who suspected that much of the slowness to learn and the bad performance in the presence of inspecting officials was deliberate, a calculated effort to delay assignment overseas.

It could not be denied that learning was slow and a sullen attitude developed. The

officers showed up just as badly as the men, although Negro officers had considerable control over the troops. By late April 1944, when some of the units had been in training for thirty-three weeks, posture was still bad, marching and manual of arms sloppy, military courtesy practically nonexistent. Instruction was being given in a desultory manner in the use of simple tools such as pick and shovel, crosscut saw, climbing irons, adze, square, and power drill. Naturally neither instructors nor trainees exhibited much interest. The progress made in the specialist schools offered the only bright spot in this dismal display. Perhaps because specialist candidates were a select group, perhaps because they wished to seize the opportunity to advance, these trainees presented quite a contrast to the mass of the men. They were attentive, interested, and applied themselves diligently and on the whole successfully. Nevertheless, the general training program was in a state of deterioration. A partial explanation lay in the fact that Brig. Gen. Lehman W. Miller, commanding at Sutton, was not a well man. Control of the center alternated between him and his executive officer, a capable man, but lacking in the tact and finesse necessary to deal with racial disturbances. A somewhat dismayed inspector from the General Staff reported in May 1944 that what the center needed above all was a firm hand.

Officers accustomed to a faster training tempo had responded to the understandable slow progress of Negro units with understandable discouragement. Added to the greater training burden was the constant psychological pressure engendered by the concentration of Negro troops. Some white

⁴¹ Ltr, ExO Camp Sutton to OCE, 4 Jul 44. 353, Sutton (C).

officers resented assignment to Negro units, became mentally depressed by the association, and in some cases were emotionally unnerved by the experience. In June 1944 Gorlinski made a visit to the center and noted that morale was very low among those officers who had been at the camp for a long period. He consequently sent in five fresh officers who were placed in strategic positions with the idea that they would leaven the pessimistic attitudes.

The center had by this time acquired the firm hand that had been recommended in April. Col. Clinton W. Ball, assigned to Sutton as executive officer by early June, assumed command in July. His previous background included "actual experience with raw jungle natives in the mines and bush of the Transvaal, Rhodesia, and German East Africa, native soldiers, Jamaica negroes, colored American soldiers of long service, river workers on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and cotton hands in Texas." Although he considered Negro troops capable of a "cunning dumbness," he believed that "for the large percentage of normal, sturdy, well-balanced American officers, their assignment to a colored unit becomes a detail like any other job."⁴² His formula for raising the training standards at Sutton, as well as for improving morale, was hard work and rigid discipline. Shortly after becoming executive officer, he wrote Gorlinski:

In connection with the uplift of morale, the following procedures have been taken. The basic trouble is that the white officers with colored units have held their heads and wondered why "they" should be picked on to command these outfits. This is a very normal reaction and takes about three days to recover. I have made it my business to get each regimental commander and staff and tell them that it has been done, can be done, and will be done, that if they do not start now to

instill discipline, fundamentals of good soldiering and housekeeping into their men, they will find that they will smoke on the decks of transports, in the holds with inflammable freight, inviting submarine attention; they will light fires and flashlights in blackouts, be careless with firearms and explosives and endanger lives of their own officers and all other troops in their vicinity. I have been petitioned by three officers directly and a few more indirectly for transfer to white units and I am sure I know what I talk of. The whole trouble is in putting some starch into these young men who have been either undertrained or mother's darlings.⁴³

The resulting campaign to put some starch into the young officers, who seemed to be suffering already from a form of claustrophobia, consisted of retaining 75 percent of all the officers on the post at all times and instituting a compulsory maintenance course for them to occupy their spare hours. They could attend to their social affairs later. Other morale measures may have had a more positive effect. As a result of a directive from ASF, a Negro captain was brought to headquarters as a part-time staff officer and trouble shooter. Mail was carefully censored. An intelligence officer gathered and sifted rumors and reports.

Despite the firm hand at Sutton the friction, resentment, and mutual suspicion at last reached a climax in the sultry days of late August 1944. Instances of insolence and insubordination to officers, M.P.'s, and civilian police became frequent. Civilians stoned busses filled with Negro soldiers, apparently without direct provocation. From several sources came definite information that the Negroes had devised a "planned, continued course of conduct against both the Post and

⁴² Ltr, CO Camp Sutton to OCE, 10 July 44, with Incl, Info for Visiting Offs. 353, Sutton (C).

⁴³ Ltr, ExO Sutton to Gorlinski, 29 Jun 44. 353, Sutton (C).

the Town of Monroe.”⁴⁴ On 29 August the Ordnance warehouse was robbed of twenty-eight pistols and a number of other weapons and instruments. Ball acted immediately. All post training ceased. He ordered the three regiments and one construction battalion off the post, miles apart, on bridge and road construction jobs and on extended marches. This left only 200 Negro soldiers on the post, the station complement, 450 German war prisoners, and a few others. After a careful search of quarters for hidden weapons, the units were brought back separately and given a thorough inspection.

The incident served to accelerate the plans to move these units overseas at their current status of training and to close down the camp completely. In spite of improvements Sutton was poorly suited for training and its facilities could not even be used for storage purposes. All of the units shipped out in mid-October and the camp closed at the end of the year. The Sutton EUTC trained about the same number of men as the Ellis center, some 13,000 in forty-nine units.

In June 1944, ASF combined replacement and unit training at the same installations, doing away with separate centers for the two types of work, redesignating them ASFTC's. The ERTC's at Belvoir, Wood, and Fort Lewis (successor to Abbot), and the EUTC at Claiborne made the change. Ellis and Sutton continued to train only units until their closing at the end of 1944.

Between April 1942 and June 1944 the Engineers concentrated most of the training of the many diverse types of service units at three locations, with a resulting economy of equipment and training overhead. Elaborate training aids for basic military training

served all units alike. Carefully constructed sites for bridging, road construction, demolitions, obstacles, and for many other general engineering subjects, promoted efficient instruction with a minimum of duplication in facilities. Equipment peculiar to specific types of units such as the semipermanent shop installations at Claiborne could be used over and over to train successive units in the repair and maintenance of machinery. Three sets of center supervisors, after training a large number of units in succession, built up a body of experience which could be applied to recurring basic problems in the training of all similar units. Each EUTC, having authority to shift men around from one unit to another, could approximate an equal distribution of talents and abilities among the units under its supervision. Centralized production of lesson plans and schedules and minute supervision helped to provide further uniformity in the quality of the units. Capacities for training grew from a provisional setup for 16,000 construction troops to a maximum of over 57,000 in the peak month of September 1943. These three centers produced a total of about 138,000 Engineers during their existence as EUTC's. These were the men who kept the machinery of the engineers' war working night and day, provided lumber, built bridges, and laid thousands of miles of pipeline for the distribution of vital petroleum products. These were the men who repaired airdromes in Europe in a matter of hours, constructed landing strips from Pacific jungle in a matter of days, and hewed strategic roads through forests and mountains the world over.

⁴⁴ Ltr, CO Camp Sutton to Dir Mil Tng Fourth SvC, 29 Aug 44. 353, Sutton (C).